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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS, CHINESE PRODUCT
RELIABILITY

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage August 17 on Typhoon Sepat, which is expected to hit Taiwan later today; on the plunge of Taiwan's stock price index Thursday; on the strong backlash from local pig farmers over the government's decision to lift the ban on ractopamine residues in pork; and on the 2008 presidential election. Several papers carried on their inside pages remarks by AIT Director Stephen Young at a Chinese National Federation of Industries forum Thursday that the United States will closely cooperate with Taiwan no matter who wins next year's presidential elections.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News" criticized the Chen Shui-bian administration for lifting the ban on ractopamine residues in pork. The article said Chen has put his personal benefits ahead of the health of the Taiwan people. An editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times," however, criticized the tainted Chinese products sold all over the world and urged the Taiwan government to control the imports of Chinese products. End summary.

¶3. U.S.-Taiwan Relations

"A Thousand Tons of U.S. Pork Breaks the Nativist Myth of the DPP"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (8/17):

"During the last few years of the Qing Dynasty, great powers from the West knocked open China's ports with their state-of-the-art ships and artillery. The same episode repeated itself after one and a half century, except that this time it was a thousand tons of U.S. pork that has knocked down the front door of the Bian administration. ...

"Some legislators alleged that the [Taiwan] government's decision to lift the ban [on ractopamine residues in pork] this time was a move in exchange for [better] treatment for Chen's [upcoming] transit in the United States. Regardless of the authenticity of such allegation, the policy change this time was both abrupt and full of many coincidences, and it has indeed put the Bian administration in the ridicule of 'using pork to exchange for foreign relations.' What a filthy deal!

"Chen Shui-bian constantly emphasized 'Taiwan's dignity' in public, and he was daring enough to confront the United States directly with his odyssey and the UN referendum just to show his personal feelings. On the other hand, however, he could turn around and sell out the Taiwan people's health in exchange for the treatment of his transit. Given such circumstances, where can one find Taiwan's dignity? It is obvious that in A-Bian's eyes, his personal benefits always come first before the United States or Taiwan. ..."

4. Chinese Product Reliability

"The Government Should Adopt Effective Measures to Control Tainted Chinese Products from Being Imported to Taiwan"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (8/17):

"... Using its competitive edge in low prices, Chinese products are sold all over the world, practically warding off competitors from other countries, ratcheting the country's foreign reserves up as high as USD 1.2 trillion now, and thus building up its powerful national strength. However, the reputation of China's manufacturing industry, the hub for the country's economic growth, is severely damaged because of the constantly reported counterfeit and safety problems of its products. Once the consumers and governments of other countries decide to adopt measures to boycott the cheap but unsafe Chinese products and to choose high-quality products manufactured in other countries instead, China's manufacturing industry will surely be severely damaged, and its economic prosperity will be put in a critical situation. Given the threat of Chinese products flooding the world, the Taiwan government, in particular, should shoulder the responsibility of solidly controlling imports of Chinese products, in an attempt to secure Taiwan's economic roots and to protect the lives and safety of the Taiwan people. This is the right way for Taiwan to stay safe and sound and shun the course of calamity given the fact that the bubbles of China's economic prosperity are about to burst."

YOUNG